

Summer 2020

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Green-Rock Audubon Society

G-RAS



Protecting Wildlife for Tomorrow

Serving Lafayette, Green,
& Rock Counties

Pelicans on the Rock River in
Janesville

THE NATURALIST

A Moment of Reflection...and Determination

Audubon CEO David Yarnold shares the message he sent to all Audubon staff after a weekend of turmoil and heartbreak in the wake of George Floyd's murder at the hands of the police.

Dear colleagues,

Black lives matter. Our nation is in turmoil because our governments, our institutions (including Audubon), and private individuals haven't done nearly enough to act on that fundamental truth.

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery should still be alive—our deeply flawed and unequal criminal justice system must change. Christian Cooper's life never should have been threatened for asking someone to leash a dog in a bird sanctuary. Black Americans should not face lower odds of survival and prosperity across every measure of wellbeing in this country, but they do.

After everything that's happened this weekend, we're starting another work week in shared isolation, unable to offer comfort in person to one another. That, too, adds to our sense of loss. Our experiences are varied, but they're nearly universal: we're shaken, angry, frightened, resolved, despondent. And some of us may be seeing the faintest glimmer of hope that change will finally come.

In *How To Be an Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi writes, "Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity, or equity between racial groups." People and institutions, Kendi argues, cannot be neutral (or "not racist") in the face of racism — they can either actively fight racism as antiracists, or uphold racism through action or inaction.

Audubon is choosing action. Instead of using vaguer words, we're going to talk about how Audubon can become *antiracist* in everything we do, internally and externally. That's going to be a long conversation.

Today, here's what I'd say to each of you:

First, take care of yourselves and each other. Managers, please check in with your teams this week to see how each person is doing and how you or Audubon can help. Take the time you need to process this moment and to express yourself.

To my colleagues who are Black and brown: Your lives and careers matter profoundly to me and to Audubon's leadership. We'll be releasing a plan by June 15 to get us collectively to a place where you are safer, more seen, and respected in your jobs every day.

To my Audubon colleagues who are white: Racism is something created and sustained by white people to give ourselves an advantage over others. It's our responsibility to understand and interrupt all the ways—large and small—that happens. Here are three things I'd like to ask you to this week:

- Talk about racism with other white people in your life this week. I saw this painted on my running trail just this morning: "Silence is violence." It was right next to the sign about social distancing, a reminder of that other life-changing event we're experiencing that continues to rage out of control and is ravaging America's most vulnerable.
- Read or listen to *How To Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. It's available as an e-book, and audio book, and, of course, a hard copy book. Audubon will cover the cost.
- Watch and share Dr. J. Drew Lanham's [keynote address from the 2017 Audubon Convention](#).

Finally, this [is #BlackBirdersWeek](#) on social media, organized by a community of Black birders, scientists, and nature lovers, including our own Tykee James. Please follow along and share—I'm looking forward to seeing everything folks have to say.

Take care,

David



Photo: John Minchillo/AP

Protesters gather at a memorial for George Floyd in Minneapolis.

It's Time to Build a Truly Inclusive Outdoors

As the nation continues to confront racism, the birding community must embrace difficult conversations.

It's early April and American Woodcocks have begun twilight mating displays, making whistling, twirling falls from the sky. You've seen them before with friends, but to abide by social distancing rules you decide on a solo trip. Then you recall the sound of gravel behind you as a police car followed you to a trail head the other day. You quickly but calmly grabbed your binoculars and pointed them to a nearby tree. Not because you saw a bird, but to prove your innocence—to de-escalate what you feared could unfold. It's cold outside and will be colder tonight when the woodcocks dance. You should layer up with your hoodie, but you know how that makes you look. Especially at night. Especially alone. You decide it's better not to go.

Every detail of this scenario is based on events experienced by me and my Black birding friends—and our fear is not for nothing. Law enforcement and vigilantes have endangered or taken Black lives more times than we can count. Names ring in our ears: Tamir, Breonna, George, Ahmaud. We have also seen the discomfort of white hikers and birders when they encounter us, sometimes suspicious or fearful, other times shocked we're even there. To raise our concerns, we've reached out to our birding communities. But instead of finding listening ears, we've been told that discussion is too political. Nature exploration is "neutral territory." How dare we bring race into birding.

As COVID-19 cases exploded, the outdoors, and birding in particular, became a source of solace and escape for many, bringing the anxiety and racism Black people experience in the outdoors into clear relief. Then a spark: [on video](#), a white woman tried to weaponize the police against a Black birder, Christian Cooper, by falsely claiming an African American man threatened her life. The issues we'd long known became international news, just as Black Lives Matter protests spread globally. My friends and I, [a group](#) of about 30 Black birders, scientists, and nature enthusiasts, decided it was the perfect time to tell the world that these aren't isolated incidents, but the fruit of an entrenched culture. With this resolve, we organized the first [Black Birders Week](#), which began May 31.

Through online events and conversations at hashtags like [#BlackInNature](#), [#BirdingWhileBlack](#), and [#BlackWomenWhoBird](#), hundreds of thousands of people saw, heard, and celebrated Black birders. Large organizations amplified our message; we were no longer silenced. Even as the pandemic kept many apart, we saw more fellow Black birders, scientists, and hikers than ever before. Still, our efforts must continue—and white people must join. We are at the cusp of a turning point that embraces human diversity as joyfully as the diversity of feathered creatures. To get there, white people must value Black lives and hear our voices—and lean into uncomfortable conversations about racism and privilege that follow. The birding community must show that it is not neutral. Neutrality is dangerous, and this is our protest.

Corina Newsome is a biology graduate student at Georgia Southern University. She has worked in wildlife conservation for eight years, and is currently a field biologist studying the MacGillivray's Seaside Sparrow.



Photo: Katherine Arntzen/Georgia Southern University
Corina Newsome birding along the Savannah River in Georgia.



Pelicans preening on a cool Saturday morning.

Carol Herzig photo

Pelicans & Eagles on the Rock River (Janesville)

by Neil Deupree

The pelicans are back on the River since late April. Last year there were two hundred that stopped by on their way through – and stayed for a few weeks. This year we’ve seen up to seventy. Most days we observe two or three dozen – across from Monterey Stadium or at the east end of Rockport Rd by Marling Lumber. It’s fun to see them fish – tipping up like mallards, but in unison. It’s an inspiration to see them fly. Their wingspread is nine feet, compared to an eagle’s six feet, eight inches. There are pictures on Facebook – Bird City Janesville and Green-Rock Audubon Society.

Speaking of eagles, we’ve been checking out their Janesville nest (also at the east end of Rockport Rd). Almost always we see an adult keeping watch over the nest. By mid-May the eaglets began peering over the edge. There are usually four or five cars gathered to make regular observations - and take pictures.

Gulls and swallows have also been active at Monterey Park. During late April and early May we have seen hundreds of swallows – many species – catching insects over the river. (It’s tough to get an ID while they are flying – considering their speed and trajectory.) Now and then there are a hundred gulls hanging out in the river and on the mud flats.

We are grateful for your support

A memorial gift for Don Gabower

Letter from Nancy Hansen Bennett and Al Bennett

Green-Rock Audubon Society lost a true friend with the passing of Don Gabower. He was a man for all seasons. Don was a driving force behind our yearly bird seed sales, delivering cheerfully in all kinds of weather and always with a positive attitude. His generosity gifted G-RAS with valuable land which became the Gabower-Reilly Wetlands. Don was generous with his time as well as his resources. (They enclosed a donation in Don's memory.)

If you also appreciate the work that Don has done and his willing spirit, please consider making a donation to his memorial fund.

Lois Ferrera is a Volunteer of the Year in Beloit

We got this notice earlier from the Beloit Daily News. "Your volunteer, Lois Ferrera, will be among those honored this year... A dozen of the community's hardest-working, big-hearted volunteers will be recognized and awarded plaques for being selected as 'Volunteers of the Month' over the past year.

She was an active part of our work crews a number of years ago, including an adrenaline filled experience at one of our controlled burns.

Way to go, Lois!

Opportunities to serve and grow.

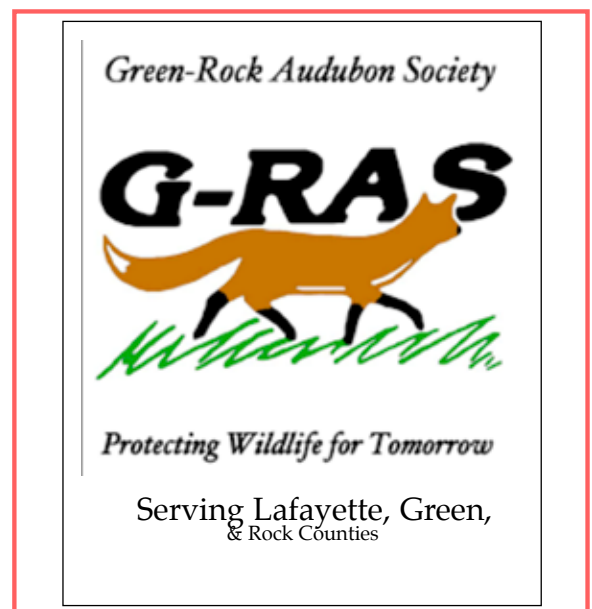
Of course, we always need hands to manage the land that we have and keep the restoration going. It's a great learning experience. Call Victor Illichmann at 608-302-8113.

Our board of directors also has space for someone who wants to be a part of the planning process for G-RAS. There is a place for another director, and if you are interested in the financial end of things, our interim treasurer would be happy to work with you to the end that you might become the treasurer. Email Joni Denker: jonidenker@gmail.com

Thanks for your support

We appreciate both the financial contributions and the vote of confidence you give us for our efforts. We have received support from the following people since February 2020:

Gary & Penny Shackelford
C.Topf Wells
Anna Brickman
Marilyn Schuler
Joanne Anderson
Nancy Beckwith
Mary Margaret Hosler
Ms Bernice Laita
Doris & Hal Robb
Wayne Tiffany
Denise VanFleet
John Ochsner
Bob & Marge Blakely
Al & Nancy Hansen Bennett
Don Hanneman



G-RASLands Summer 2020 Report

Prepared by Victor Illichmann
Land Manager

Help We have a small group of dedicated volunteers working miracles. We didn't have Workenders this year. Our group is smaller. We are making up for this by scheduling a work party for 2 days each week. We sometimes come in and do work on other days. We have variety of things to work on from cutting and stacking brush, mowing, spraying, herbiciding, checking tree tubes, weed control, and other projects. Maintaining social distancing is no problem.

We are spending around \$2,600 for herbicide to kill canary grass this year. We could end up spending that much on Crossbow to foliar spray brush. We will be using Garlon to basal bark treat brush and trees. Seeding 10 acres to prairie will cost around \$11,000.

Any time or money you can contribute will be put to good use.

Androne Woods Our order for \$1,000 trees was canceled. We'll plant them next year. We planted 100 witch hazel. We torched the garlic mustard in half this 16 acres. We have been cutting and stacking brush and fallen trees. We need to get around 600 to 700 hours of volunteer time for our DNR Grant by August next year. That will earn us \$6,600, about half of which can pay for our expenses and the rest would be profit for us. The work with stacking brush and fallen trees, basal bark treating woody invasives, and working with tree protectors all can be put towards this time.

This is a good time to view wild flowers, The Rue Anemone, Woodland Anemone, merry bells, Yellow Wood Violets, trilliums, and other flowers are putting on a show.

Cleophas Reserve We have sprayed 21 acres of canary grass here. The bridges have been repaired and 21 acres were burned this spring. It is amazing how many prairie forbs have survived through years of grazing and being overrun with buckthorn and other woody vegetation. There are some areas with heavy weed growth. We are going to wait until the parsnip starts making seeds and mow to control them. We have managed to mow the fire breaks without a submarine.

Gabower-Reilly Reserve We have mowed the fire breaks. We will kill a lot of brush here soon. In Gabower-Reilly East we've removed most of the fence and sprayed some canary grass.

Spring Creek Reserve We will pivot to work here on May 22nd. We have a lot of canary grass to spray and bush to mow and foliar spray.

Don Gabower

Prepared by Victor Illichmann

We are saddened by Don's passing. He was an important part of G-RAS from its inception.

Before I was active in G-RAS, Don contributed the money to finalize the purchase of Gabower-Reilly Reserve. In 2007 we got a letter from the USDA. We were in noncompliance at Spring Creek Reserve. We had a timeline to meet or else. We were in danger of losing our CRP Contracts and could be liable to repay the money we'd received in the past. We had a \$60,000 debt, no money, no equipment, and no crew. Don came to the rescue. We used his tractor and brush hog, his fuel, and he paid for needed repairs. My heart was out of rhythm most of that summer so most of the work fell on Don's shoulders. We mowed 33 acres that summer and rescued G-RAS.

Don spent hours with a Weed Whipper. These had bicycle sized wheels, no reverse, and no traction. They were horrible to work with in the brush. Many areas that are open now, when we went through the first time, our trail was like a green tunnel. Don used this machine to mow raspberries at Androne Woods so we could get at the garlic mustard.

Any time we were in need, Don was there. He is sorely missed.

Green-Rock Audubon Society



Protecting Wildlife for Tomorrow

Join Green-Rock Audubon Society

Your Name: _____
Your Mailing Address: _____
Your E-mail: _____
Would you prefer to receive the newsletter electronically? ____

Two Ways to Join

___ I wish to join Green-Rock Audubon Society, I understand that I will not receive the Audubon Magazine, but all dues will go to G-RAS. Dues: \$10 Senior or Student, \$15 Single Membership, \$20 Couple

• To pay by mail, make checks payable to G-RAS, and mail this form along with the check to this address:

Green-Rock Audubon
Attn: Treasurer
P.O. Box 1986
Janesville, WI 53547-1986

• To pay online visit <https://www.greenrockaudubon.org/donate>

___ I wish to join the National Audubon Society's normal membership of \$35 per year which includes the Audubon Magazine. (Please visit <http://audubon.org/> to complete this membership.)

Volunteering Interests

I would like to volunteer for...

- ___ Whatever is Needed
- ___ Burning
- ___ Brushing
- ___ Spraying
- ___ Seed Collecting
- ___ Planting

I can volunteer at:

- ___ Whenever is Needed
- ___ Androne Woods
- ___ Cleophas Reserve
- ___ Spring Creek Reserve
- ___ Gabower-Reilly Reserve
- ___ The Pond (Janesville)
- ___ Sunny Peace Prairie

Donate Beyond Membership

I would like to donate to...

- ___ Whatever is Needed
- ___ Purchasing
- ___ Herbicides
- ___ Purchasing Spray Equipment

I want my donation to support G-RAS's efforts to manage or maintain...

- ___ Androne Woods
- ___ Cleophas Reserve
- ___ Spring Creek Reserve
- ___ Gabower-Reilly Reserve
- ___ Sunny Peace Prairie

Times I can usually volunteer:

- ___ Monday
- ___ Tuesday
- ___ Wednesday
- ___ Thursday
- ___ Friday
- ___ Saturday
- ___ Sunday

Volunteer Coordinator:

Victor Illichmann
viccarol@sbcglobal.net
608.752.8342

(Please mail checks according to the directions above or visit our website.)

Membership Form Inside

Green-Rock Audubon Society (G-RAS) membership for one year with quarterly newsletter Green Rock Naturalist from Green Rock Audubon Society (all dues go to G-RAS).

- Senior or Student membership \$10
- Single person membership \$15
- Couples membership \$20



@GRAudubon, #GreenRockAudubon
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www.greenrockaudubon.org

Board of Directors

To contact the directors e-mail greenrockaudubon@gmail.com

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Green-Rock Audubon Society

G-RAS



Protecting Wildlife for Tomorrow

FUNDRAISER EVENT:

LIVE MUSIC BY RAINBOW BRIDGE, FUN, DANCING, FOOD,
 RAFFLES, 50/50, SILENT AUCTION

LOCATION:

AMERICAN LEGION POST 209
 3913 SOUTH HWY 213
 ORFORDVILLE, WI 53576

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2020
 FROM 6 PM UNTIL 10 PM

CANCELLED

Green-Rock Audubon Society

G-RAS



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Serving Lafayette, Green,
 & Rock Counties